

Constitutional Government.

199

to take into account the progress represented by the growth of the monarchy in the struggle with feudal anarchy. It ignores the fact that the growth of the monarchy was, to some extent at least, the vindication of the rights of the people as against the *regime* of lawless force. The idea of constitutional government which it opposes to an absolute, oppressive, royal *regime* is, however, on the side of progress, considering the circumstances of the age in which it was written, and the influence of this idea on both Catholics and Protestants was immense, as is shown by the appeal to the States-General on both sides. The book passed through three editions in as many years. It created a sensation in learned circles, and, by means of a translation from the original Latin, in the wider circle of the nation as well. It continued to be read when the struggle that inspired it was over, and to nurture the democratic spirit of the eighteenth century even after the more scientific labours of Adrien de Valois, and especially of Freret, had discredited many of its historical contentions.

Unlike Hotman, the author of the "Vindiciæ contra Tyrannos," who is supposed to have been Hubert Languet, bases his antagonism to absolute monarchy on scriptural and theoretic rather than on historic grounds. His reasoning turns on the doctrine of the contract, which he first brings into prominence in these modern times. From this point of view, his book, which was published in 1579 and translated into French two years later under the title "De la Puissance Légitime du Prince sur le Peuple," is of capital importance in the history of modern progressive political thought, apart from its significance in relation to the mighty controversies of the age. It inspired Hooker and Locke, and its influence may be traced in the declaration of the rights of the subject on which the Dutch Republic was founded. Unlike Locke, however, at a later time, the author, who adopted the pseudonym of Junius Brutus, appeals to this contract in the spirit of the theologian rather than of the philosopher. His method is to posit certain questions and answer them by the aid of Scripture as well as reason, and, incidentally, of history in general.

Question one : Are subjects bound to obey a king who commands what is contrary to the law of God ? Our author